

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Ethics  
Corporate Ethics

In order for you to enjoy your job, you need to work at a place where your own personal values are not in conflict with those of your employer. Personal freedom versus conformity weighs differently for each person. Some individuals value personal freedom more than others do. Even before applying for a position within a company, you need to ask yourself if this is a company in which you can be proud. Do you doubt the integrity of the company? For those people who are fortunate to work for an organization headed by ethical leaders, making ethical decisions is fairly easy. People who find themselves working for unethical organizations have at least three choices:

- ◆ Accept the company's way of doing business and try to adapt without becoming personally involved in unethical decisions.
- ◆ Seek employment elsewhere and leave the organization.
- ◆ Learn to stand alone, which means being the person who attempts to change the unethical organization from within. This is an extremely stressful role, which often requires a great deal of personal courage.

Falsifying resumes and job experience can be called exaggerating, stretching the truth, or fudging. Whatever it is called, when you are not telling the truth on your resume about your education or job experience, you are lying. Lying on resumes is a fairly regular activity of many people. Notre Dame Football coach, George O'Leary, resigned after admitting he lied about his background. The Mayor of Salem, Massachusetts, Stanley Usovich, Jr., falsely claimed that he earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Massachusetts. Others in high-level positions have resigned or were fired after the facts were revealed.

Checking another person's educational records is a rather easy process, but many employers do not bother. As a result, individuals get away with unethical behavior and figure they can continue to do so.

The most common resume lies include making up jobs or degrees and inflating titles and duties. Often people lie about things they do not need to lie about. But if the company discovers a lie, it may then consider the person unethical and be unwilling to hire that person. If the lie is found out later, after employment has started, most companies will release the employee from their job on the basis of a false application.

### Scenario

You are an administrative assistant at one of the few large and stable companies in your midsize town. You are very thankful to have a job at such a great company when other nearby companies have struggled to stay afloat financially. Friends often say how much they would like to work at your company because of the job security.

One of your closest friends, Scott, has been going through hard times, having recently lost his job when his company downsized. You know of a job opening at your company that would be perfect for Scott, and you let him know about it. Scott is thrilled to hear of a position with your company that is a perfect match for his qualifications; he is also happy to have you as an inside track to getting the job. He immediately applies for the job and asks if you will provide him with a letter of recommendation. You agree to do so, as you would like nothing better than for Scott to work at the same place you do.

Last week you dropped by the human resources department to tell them to be on the lookout for Scott's application. You mentioned that he would be perfect for the job and that you hoped his application would get to the top of the stack. You have rarely done this kind of thing, but you felt comfortable in this case because you and Scott are such good friends. Further, you believed you were helping because he has been out of work for some time.

Yesterday Scott came by to talk to you about the job. He said, "I am so grateful you told me about this job! I need a job so badly, and this one would be perfect. It's great that you can be my inside track. Thanks for agreeing to write a letter of recommendation for me. A letter from you should surely cinch the job for me!"

Then your heart almost stopped as he went on to say, "I want to let you know that I made a couple of adjustments on my application and resume. You know when my previous employer had a cutback? Well, actually, I was fired a month earlier. I put down the date that coincides with the layoff. It'll be much easier to explain. And, also, you remember that last class I took at the community college? Well, I never did finish it, so I'm one class short of my degree. I figure it won't be noticed. Anyway I can cover it up somehow if it is found out. After all, I'm only a few credits short."

1. What are the possible conflicts in this scenario? There are several.
2. What are possible outcomes of this scenario?
3. What are the possible impacts on others for your decision?
4. What would you do in this scenario and why did you make that decision?